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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5152  
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0473  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 001743

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [AADP](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)

SUBJECT: BEMBA FOCUSING ON POLITICAL FUTURE IN OPPOSITION

REF: KINSHASA 1740

Classified By: PolCouns DBrown, reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary. Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba has effectively recognized he has lost the October 29 DRC elections, but is laying the groundwork for claiming electoral fraud. Nonetheless, he increasingly is focusing on his political future. He told the Ambassador he and his troops plan to move to a military camp on the outskirts of Kinshasa temporarily so that their presence will not be a pretext for violence when the electoral commission announces provisional results. He called on the international community not to ignore the opposition and remain engaged in constructing the DRC's new democracy. He described working "correctly" with President Joseph Kabila and senior government security officials to defuse the November 11 violence. He acknowledged that both he and Kabila have "crazies" in their camps who need to be contained. Bemba would not commit, however, to a forthcoming statement urging calm concurrent with CEI publication of election results. Bemba appeared relaxed, and the atmosphere around his residence did not suggest a state of alert. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Ambassador met with Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba November 12 for an exchange of views on the DRC electoral process and the November 11 confrontation between Bemba supporters and police (reftel); PolCouns sat in as notetaker. The meeting took place at Bemba's private residence on the riverside. Atmospherics were positive.

¶3. (C) Bemba said he did not know when the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) planned to announce its nationwide provisional vote count, but said the CEI had promised to give him advance notice. He noted he had sent four letters to the CEI alleging fraud and had not yet received any response, but did not press the point in subsequent conversation. He clearly laid the groundwork, however, for later claims of election fraud. The Ambassador pointed out that Bemba has some allies in his coalition who are extremists and capable of provoking unrest. Bemba acknowledged that both camps have their "crazies" who need to be contained, and asserted firmly that he had passed the message to his men to respect the democratic process. He said he wanted to be sure that he and his camp are not the source of problems when election results are announced.

¶4. (C) Bemba provided additional details on an accord to garrison the greater part of his troops which the CIAT learned of the afternoon of November 12. He said he would move his forces, with the exception of a small number of troops and their families, from his official and private residences to an existing military camp at Maluku, just

outside of Kinshasa, prior to announcement of election results. MONUC and EUFOR would cooperate to ensure security.

Bemba said he would move temporarily to the camp as well to eliminate any pretext for renewed violence in the Gombe area of Kinshasa. He said MONUC had agreed to take responsibility for security outside his official residence downtown.

¶5. (C) Although Bemba did not specifically acknowledge that he had lost the election, he spoke at length on the importance of an opposition as a check on government and as a means of preparing to govern in the future. He said that African governments usually seek to rid themselves of opposition. He called this "short-term" thinking and expressed concern that Kabila's AMP alliance is moving in that direction. He specifically asked that the international community respect the position of the opposition as well as the government in order to sustain the creation of a new democracy.

¶6. (C) The Ambassador emphasized that the United States intends to remain engaged. He said we would continue to insist on the importance of a viable opposition and a functioning democracy. He noted that a monopoly on power by any party is dangerous and unstable, and that all should participate openly and responsibly in the political process. Bemba agreed with all points. Preliminary totals released by the CEI confirm his strong base of support in the western, Lingala-speaking half of the country. The Ambassador noted that his party could win control of four or five of the new provincial governments.

¶7. (C) Bemba's description of the November 11 violence (reftel) stands in contrast to the confusion that contributed

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to the violence of August 20-22. It was evident he sees his intervention as crucial to resolving it. He said he called President Kabila immediately after learning of the initial shootings. He asserted that he persuaded Interior Minister Denis Kalume to order police forces to halt firing into the air, which had alarmed Bemba's troops. He also claimed to have convinced Congolese army chief General Gabriel Amisi not to deploy troops to areas of the firefight. He similarly said he convinced General Dieudonne Banza not to call out the Presidential Guard. He indicated he was satisfied with the contacts among the parties to end the violence, characterizing his coordination with the various officials as "correct."

¶8. (C) Bemba also essentially confirmed several agreements brokered by MONUC. He said he had reached agreement for joint patrols by his forces, the FARDC 7th Integrated Brigade and the guards of Air Force General John Numbi of the cemetery across the road from his downtown residence. Numbi lives nearby and his guards participated in the November 11 fight. The cemetery has been a constant site of tension among armed forces present in the area and was a focus of the Saturday shooting.

¶9. (C) The Ambassador said that all parties should work together to ensure that the current situation did not deteriorate. Bemba repeatedly stated that his side would not be the source of problems. The Ambassador emphasized that we need to continue working together to ensure that people are aware that a new era has begun.

¶10. (C) The Ambassador encouraged Bemba to make a public statement at the same time of the CEI's announcement of election results, reiterating a call for calm, and potentially signaling his intent to continue to participate politically in the DRC. Bemba demurred, vaguely stating the content of any such announcement would depend on what kind of response he got from the CEI regarding the election process. He did assert again that he would do everything necessary to ensure that MLC forces are not responsible for any new violence, but would not commit to the kind of statement the

Ambassador was proposing.

¶11. (C) Comment. Bemba appeared relaxed and in good humor and expressed none of the aggressive rhetoric we have seen from some of his allies in recent days. While the usual assortment of guards and hangers-on were around his house, the atmosphere around the compound did not suggest a state of alert. It is clear he can read the numbers and is focusing on his political future. Moving his troops out of central Kinshasa for the anticipated announcement of election results will significantly reduce the prospects of armed clashes. In addition, it promises to win him points with the same international players whose support he will need to create a viable opposition force to an expected Kabila government. End comment.

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